Changing Societies & Personalities, 2019
Vol. 3, No. 2, pp. 160–163
http://dx.doi.org/10.15826/csp.2019.3.2.069

BOOK REVIEW

Michael Goodhart (2018). Injustice: Political Theory for the Real World. Oxford University Press

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It is ubiquitous today for political theorists and philosophers to challenge traditional and dominant methods of the discipline. The book written by Michael Goodhart, Professor of Political Science at the University of Pittsburgh, offers an original, radical and provocative approach to the problem of injustice. It has already received a review by Marcus Arvan, who indicated many problems there, although acknowledging its virtues. While considering the two problematic premises, which Goodhart purports to identify, as wrong, he supports what Goodhart calls three pathologies of ideal moral theory (the meaning of terms is to be explained below). However, Arvan criticizes Goodhart's alternative bifocal approach and accuses him of relativism. Eventually, Arvan does not pay due attention to the rest of the book, which "suffers as a result" (Arvan, 2019). I will try to show the general picture of the book without focusing only on a single part while keeping as impartial as possible.

The main problem the book deals with is that so called *Ideal Moral Theory* (IMT), the dominant approach to political theory that cannot adequately address the problem of injustice in the real world. Following from that, the primary aim of the book, as Goodhart puts it, "is to do better with respect to injustice – to do better in making sense of it and in bringing theory to bear on it in ways that might help to advance the work of people struggling against injustices of all kinds" (p. 8). The book comprises three parts and seven chapters, where each part can be thought as a stage of critical reflection process. First, there is an attempt to "unthink" IMT by showing that it does not help to understand what injustice is. The alternative called the bifocal approach is presented in the second part. Finally, it is shown how the new approach can be adopted to combat injustice.

The first part of the book (*Unthinking Ideal Moral Theory*) is aimed to show that IMT is mistaken in its assumptions and premises, which are the

Received 12 June 2019
Published online 1 July 2019

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reason why it is unhelpful to address injustice. In the first chapter (*The Trouble with Justice*), Goodhart applies the procedure of estrangement or defamiliarization to look at IMT as at something less obvious or necessary. He explains that IMT is *ideal* for it depicts "justice in its pure or perfect form, uncontaminated by specific considerations of context and circumstance" (p. 25) and *moral* for it is "conceived as having categorical normative force – that is, as engendering or entailing binding duties and responsibilities" (pp. 25–26). He notes two troubling assumptions of IMT: "The first is that injustice can only be conceived as the absence or opposite of justice" (p. 27). To prove this position, Goodhart relies on Judith Shklar's ideas. The second assumption is that it is supposed "to provide 'ideal guidance', by which is meant something like using ideal moral principles of justice to criticize existing social arrangements, to evaluate (normatively and comparatively) the *status quo* and possible alternatives to it, and to recommend reforms (policies, institutional changes) intended to make society more just (more like the ideal)" (p. 29).

The three pathologies "can be traced back to the two troubling assumptions at the heart of IMT" (p. 31). The first is theoretical paralysis, the inability to go beyond the debates about "which conception of justice should be adopted" (p. 32). The second pathology is subordination of politics to morality. The final pathology is distortional thinking that reveals that justice might function ideologically.

The second chapter (*Barking Up the Wrong Trees*) uses questions "about selection of principles of justice, about the scope of justice, and about the effects of the global order on the poor" (p. 47) to show that claims about justice and injustice are subjected to the pathologies that make justice claims inevitably ideological. Goodhart criticizes constructivist approaches on global normative theory, taking Gillian Brock's initial choice situation (ICS) as an example. Then he analyzes various approaches justice, such as statist, cosmopolitan, hybrid and pluralist. Finally, he throws opposing views against each other regarding global poverty by taking accounts of Pogge and Risse.

In the second part (*Reconceptualizing the Problem*), Goodhart proposes the bifocal approach, a radical alternative to IMT for addressing injustice. The third chapter (*Getting Real?*) reflects alternative approaches to IMT elaborated within realist political theory, particularly Sen's realism-lite or nonideal realism (criticized for the similarity of the procedures he relies on with those of IMT), Williams' liberal realism (criticized for conservatism), and Geuss' critical realism. The approach Goodhart develops is realistic although not realist. He distances himself from realist political theory. In this sense, it seems closer to the approach David Miller applies in his book "Strangers in Our Midst" (Miller, 2016). Eventually, Goodhart criticizes realism for the wanting conception of normativity.

The fourth chapter (*The Bifocal Approach*) shows how realistic and normative frameworks can be combined into a single theoretical framework. The essence of the bifocal approach is the following: "it differentiates between but integrates two distinct tasks or functions of political theory: explanation and critique/ prescription" (p. 116). For this, Goodhart employs two lenses, namely, analytical and "partisan". Using these lenses, all justice claims are viewed as ideological claims. He insists

on the bifocal approach "because it accommodates normative and prescriptive theorizing from inside an ideological perspective without confusing that work with an exercise in ideal moral theory" (p. 117). As a result, we can see the two-dimensional politics of injustice, which requires a special account of normativity irreducible to morality. Goodhart considers Philippa Foot's conception of normativity as the valid one. He differentiates between the widespread categorical normativity and hypothetical normativity that is the basis of bifocal approach.

In the fifth chapter (*A Democratic Account on Injustice*), Goodhart applies the lenses of the bifocal approach to explain core democratic values and commitments (freedom and equality). He analyzes different types of power, democratic methods and knowledge, feminist epistemology, dialectical thinking and critical theory. Injustice is characterized as a "deformity in social relations where power creates or perpetuates subjection" (p. 154). Goodhart distinguishes three overlapping categories of injustice: domination, oppression, and exploitation. He also stands against a fixed definition of injustice in a diverse society because it can become a source of epistemic domination. After depicting his democratic account, the author differentiates himself from critical theorists.

The third part is focused on the practical differences bifocal approach makes, particularly on how political theorists can combat injustice and how we think of responsibility for injustice. In the sixth chapter (*Political Theory and the Politics of Injustice*), Goodhart holds that doing political theory is necessarily taking sides because "claims about justice and injustice are ideological claims" (p. 174). He holds that politics of injustice is a counterhegemonic politics, which means "struggles over injustice frequently require recontesting key elements of a hegemonic ideology, challenging the dominant meanings and interpretations that naturalize or normalize those injustices" (p. 180), and "politics that recognizes and acts on the realization that struggles over injustice are in large part struggles over values, ideas, and interpretations" (p. 181). Then Goodhart reflects upon collective political action, discursive politics, difference between articulation and justification and its relation to translation.

In the final chapter (*Taking Responsibility for Injustice*), Goodhart describes various ideas to consider the problem of systemic injustice "like hunger, poverty, and sweatshops – injustices originating in complex social systems, structures, and processes" (p. 206) and responsibility for it. By criticizing Iris Marion Young's idea of structural injustice, he aims to show that philosophical (or moral) understanding of responsibility is misleading. To combat injustice, we need to think of responsibility as a political problem, which is shown by the bifocal approach. The author is inclined to understand taking responsibility as "to assume responsibility when one has no obligation to do so", because "it provides us with a useful way to make sense of an important aspect of many people's engagement in struggles against systemic injustice" (p. 222). In other words, Goodhart understands responsibility for injustice as a political problem in virtue of the contingency of our judgements and constant ideological contestation.

To conclude, this book raises a serious problem of contemporary political theory by showing its one-sided character and inability to address the real-world political

issues. Goodhart's idea creates more problems than solves and generates more questions than it is supposed to. Eventually, it is up to the reader to consider it either as merit or weakness. If someone is interested in the problem of injustice, this book can be a great companion to delve deeper into the problem. The work will be useful for those interested in IMT generally as well because it allows to look at its downsides. However, the reader is supposed to be properly prepared, for both the criticism and the argument of the book are built on colliding rival views and approaches.

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